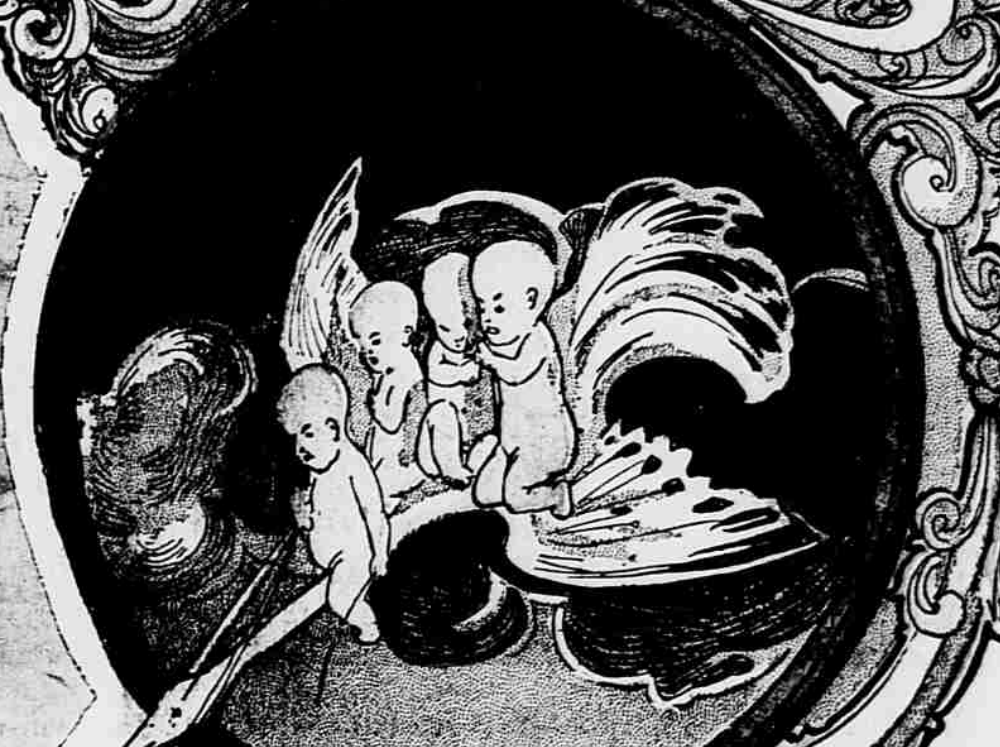


ST. LOUIS REPUBLIC MAGAZINE



WHEN THEY HAVE BEEN FED
THEY COME BACK AS QUIET AS MICE



IN THE CORRIDOR SCREAMING AND YELLING.

CHARITY'S HOMES FOR THE FOUNDLING BABIES OF ST. LOUIS.

WRITTEN FOR THE SUNDAY REPUBLIC.
Five hundred foundling babies are in the city to-day that will never know the taste of their birth, that will grow up believing themselves born of their adopted parents. To this work is directed the energies of several large charities. The results promise that this factor of the population will be no discredit to the community, but will contribute its share of good men and women.

The only institution of the kind in the city which has been in existence for more

than one generation is St. Ann's Asylum, at Tenth and O'Fallon streets. For fifty years the infant, fatherless and motherless has found loving care at the hands of the sisters of this asylum. Thousands have been nursed there. Thousands have been adopted from there and grown to maturity.

"What has become of them, you ask?" said one of the sisters last week.

"They have gone forth into every walk of life. Some that I know are lawyers, some doctors and others prominent in commercial life."

Of the girls, many have developed into dutiful mothers and lived most exemplary Christian lives. "But the secret of their identity we alone know, and it is a secret guarded by us continually. From the instant of adoption, when we allow them to enter a family, the necessity that the secret of their birth be kept from them forever, is impressed upon the parents by adoption."

"If this be done the child is under no ban. The noble and religious instincts, their fullest mental abilities and their moral

sense can be cultivated to the utmost. But if the knowledge of the circumstances of their birth come to them, especially at a time when their character is not fully formed, that may mean a moral collapse."

INFANTS ADOPTED BY WELL-MEANING MEN AND WOMEN.

Such is the belief of all who come in contact with foundlings, who watch over them and find them homes.

The conclusion seems to be that moral degeneracy by heredity is only possible when the child awakens to a consciousness

of its condition, when the child knows the crime of the parent and feels by that crime condemned. The knowledge withheld and the same child would show the fruit of a rational upbringing.

The possibility of thus giving each unfortunate little one, which by the accident of its birth is so unaccountably launched, its full opportunity in life, is proven by the fact that the demand by honest and well-meaning persons for babies to adopt is greater than the supply.

Few every child in good health in the various institutions of the city, there comes an applicant who is only too glad to give it the attention of a mother.

If the babe be blighted at birth by a chronic disease, or a physical degeneracy of any kind, then its earthly life is one to be pitied. Many of these very unfortunate ones live and die within the confines of charitable institutions.

The principal St. Louis hospitals and asylums which enter into this work are the St. Louis Female Hospital, the Bethesda Foundlings' Home, the Rebekah Home, the Mothers and Babies' Home, St. Ann's Asylum, the Home for Convalescent Women, the Rescue Home and the various orphan asylums.

Nearly all of these institutions operate a maternity ward. Probably St. Ann's and the Female Hospital do more work of this kind than any of the others.

Many poor women avail themselves of the medical attention and care to be had at the maternity hospitals.

Three hundred babies were born in the Female Hospital last year. To this public institution go the most unfortunate cases.

HOMELESS MOTHERS WHO APPLY FOR SHELTER.

The mothers are either found by the police or apply for a shelter. The circumstances under which these three hundred babies enter life would indicate that little future could exist for them, but this is not the fact.

The city officials placed in charge of the Female Hospital are physicians in a moral as well as a professional sense.

As one of the doctors said:

"The medical phases of the cases are usually simple compared with other purely human problems that arise. The mothers often seem to show a distinct revulsion for the children. They seem to feel that the child is a living accuser."

"We are in close relation with the churches, of course, and the charitable institutions, and the representatives of both of these work among the mothers, trying to rouse in them the maternal instinct and the moral obligation to properly care for the babies."

"As physicians we do our utmost to assist in this, and frequently succeed."

Very many, however, of the mothers, so not toward their offspring, that it is deemed necessary to separate them. Thus the Fe-

male Hospital adds to the number of foundlings, whom the mothers willfully desert. An affecting instance of this kind occurred only a short time ago.

A Polish girl, apparently about 16 years old, entered the hospital. She had been in this country only a short time and could not speak the language.

She became the mother of a beautiful girl baby, in perfect health. Her conduct toward the child roused the suspicions of the doctors in charge. It seemed that she was endeavoring to starve her child to death.

A Polish priest was summoned who visited the girl, and questioned her closely. The young mother completely broke down, and confessed that she planned the destruction of the baby, and that her firm purpose was, as soon as released from the hospital, to throw the child into the river.

CHILD WAS TAKEN FROM ITS PARENT.

The baby was taken from its parent, and a few days ago was adopted by a childless couple of means.

The physicians say that the infant promised well, and gave every indication of possessing a strong vitality and good mental qualities.

The children are kept two or three weeks at the Female Hospital. Then, if without homes, they are sent to one of the private institutions.

Many are adopted direct from the hospital.

Couples go thither frequently, and undertake the adoption of the diminutive patients. In numerous instances, the mothers, though wives, already have a large family, and are too poor to raise another child properly. Often such babies as these go to parents by adoption.

Those wishing to obtain a child, must first secure letters vouching for their character from a physician or priest or minister. If these guarantee that the applicant is a fit person to undertake the rearing of a child, then one is given them.

A single lusty baby as a rule is sufficient to conquer, even terror, an ordinary man. It is a way they have, these infinitesimal bits of humanity.

They look very charming in their crib. You approach to play with them. They stretch. You try. Mother, only, is the potent personage under the circumstances.

Imagine sixty babies, all in one room, all lusty, especially about "bottle" time, which means meal time.

That is what greets the masculine visitor to the foundling ward of the Bethesda Home.

At the Bethesda are housed a large percentage of the foundlings found during the year in the city.

It is the largest Protestant asylum for the kind in St. Louis. St. Ann's is the largest Catholic institution.

In the home at one time are between

sixty and one hundred of the babies, varying in age between one day and three years.

Within the experience of Mrs. Roger Hayne, who has been a leader in the management of the Bethesda work, a permanent abode has been found for the little ones before any became older than 3 years.

FED UPON MILK AND PREPARED FOODS.

Though fed from infancy upon cow's milk and prepared foods, they seem as healthy as other children, and as happy.

The absence of a mother's care would seem to cause sorrow. The only sign or indication that they are conscious of a lack, is to bestow all their affections upon those who are with them—the nurses.

It is women to whom these infants seem drawn. But if they have the where to place their affections, they seem to like life very well, on the whole. At "bottle" time, they become vociferous, and twist up their faces, in a most extraordinary manner; but the common observation on the point is that such traits are common to babies of whatever description.

Wheeled along in one big crib, down the corridor screaming to the "dining-room," they at once subside when once they get the bottle to the lip.

Fed, they come back quiet as mice, inclined rather to sleep.

The room of sixty babies contains sixty in the baby category each of which, externally at least, seems to be quite the counterpart of any baby.

The one reclines on its pillow and looks up at you with big, wide, curious eyes, solemn as an owl. Another smiles most engagingly, and speaks in a babyish tone in a wild attempt to get your cravat pin. A third is occupied in an effort to swallow its feet.

All of which goes to show that babies are babies, "whatever befalls."

The Bethesda Home has been in existence fifteen years. Mrs. Hayne, speaking of the children cared for in that time, was optimistic of their future.

"They exhibit," said she, "the same differences of mental ability that other children do. Many are very bright."

"Such of these as have found homes, and of whom I am now cognizant, are leaders in their classes at school, and give every indication of leading moral and successful lives."

"In giving the children out for adoption, we are very careful. We try to place the right child among the right surroundings, such as will sugar best for it."

"I am glad to say that the majority of couples who adopt, do so sincerely."

"We allow them to take a child for a month or so to decide whether they wish to undertake its care through life. Very seldom are any returned."

PERSONS wishing to adopt a child must first secure letters vouching for their character from a physician and priest or minister. If these guarantee that the applicant is a fit person to undertake the rearing of a child, then one is given them. The principal St. Louis hospitals and asylums which care for infants are the St. Louis Female Hospital, the Bethesda Foundlings' Home, the Rebekah Home, the Mothers and Babies' Home, St. Ann's Asylum, the Home for Convalescent Women, the Rescue Home and the various orphan asylums.